

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2039

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, XF
SUBJECT: SOVIET M.E. OUTLOOK ON EVE OF SECRETARY'S VISIT

REF: (A) MOSCOW 0646 (NOTAL), (B) MOSCOW 0974 (NOTAL),
(C) 76 MOSCOW 19377 (NOTAL), (D) 76 MOSCOW 20107

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. ON THE EVE OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT
TO THE M.E., MOSCOW'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.S. AND ITS
LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE REGION IS ONE OF SUSPICION AND
WATCHFUL WAITING TO SEE WHAT THE U.S. WILL BE UP TO AND
WHAT IT WILL EXPECT OF THE SOVIET UNION. MOSCOW CLEARLY
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SEES THE INITIATIVE IN U.S. HANDS, BUT THROUGH VISITS
BY QADHAFI AND SADAM HUSSEIN AND THROUGH ITS REFUSAL
TO PAY ITS SHARE OF THE COSTS OF THE UN FORCES IN SINAI
HAS REMINDED US OF ITS TROUBLE-MAKING PROPENSITY.

2. MOSCOW BADLY WANTS TO RETURN TO GENEVA WHERE ITS
GREAT POWER ROLE WILL BE RECOGNIZED AND ENHANCED AND

WHERE IT WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR FORCING THE U.S. BACK INTO THE POLARIZED SITUATION FROM WHICH WE ESCAPED AFTER THE OCTOBER WAR. SOVIET IRRITATION AND RESENTMENT OVER U.S. POST-OCTOBER 1973 M.E. POLICY LEAVES MOSCOW DEEPLY OPPOSED TO ANY FURTHER U.S. UNILATERAL EFFORT THAT APPEARS TO EXCLUDE MOSCOW FROM THE M.E. ACTION. END SUMMARY.

3. ON THE EVE OF THE SECRETARY'S M.E. TRIP, THE KREMLIN VIEW OF THIS REGION --VITAL TO THE WEST AND IMPORTANT TO MOSCOW--MUST BE BLEAK INDEED. MOSCOW'S POSITION OF INFLUENCE IN THE M.E. HAS STEADILY DECLINED FROM THE HIGH POINT FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER WAR WHEN MOSCOW WAS ON THE SIDE OF THE ARAB ANGELS AND THE U.S. AND ISRAEL STOOD VIRTUALLY ALONE FACING WHAT APPEARED TO BE FORMIDABLE ARAB UNITY ON THE ONE HAND AND A DIVIDED AND TEMPORARILY DISUNITED EUROPE ON THE OTHER.

4. MOSCOW HAS NO REASON TO BE PLEASED WITH THE MANNER IN WHICH THE U.S. NOT ONLY NEATLY ESCAPED THIS POLARIZED SITUATION, BUT ALSO VIRTUALLY EXCLUDED THE SOVIET UNION FROM THE DIPLOMATIC PROCESS OF ACCOMPLISHING THE PARTIAL AGREEMENTS WHICH TEMPORARILY DEFUSED THE EXPLOSIVE M.E. HENCE, THE SOVIETS WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK WITH SUSPICION ON PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER U.S. INITIATIVES IN BRINGING ABOUT MOVEMENT TOWARD A M.E. PEACE SETTLEMENT. EVEN A SUGAR COATING OF U.S.-SOVIET CONSULTATIONS ON M.E. PROBLEMS AND POLICIES IS NOT GOING TO DO MUCH TO ALTER MOSCOW'S TENDENCY
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TO SUSPECT THE WORST IN TERMS OF U.S. CONSIDERATION (OR LACK THEREOF) OF SOVIET INTEREST AND SELF-ESTEEM IN THE AREA.

5. MOSCOW'S CYNICAL VIEW OF U.S. POST-OCTOBER 1973 M.E. POLICY HAS BEEN ABUNDANTLY SPELLED OUT BY SEVERAL SOVIET OBSERVERS, MOST PROMINENT OF WHICH IS YEVGINIY M. PRIMAKOV, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE PRESTIGIOUS INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (IMEMO). PRIMAKOV, BY PRIOR PROFESSION AN ARABIST AND JOURNALIST, HAS DRAWN EXTENSIVELY ON THE RECENT WORKS OF THE ISRAELI WRITER MATTIGOLAN AND THE AMERICAN EDWARD SHEEHAN FOR THREE DETAILED ARTICLES, INDICTING RECENT U.S. M.E. POLICY (PUBLISHED IN THE DECEMBER 1976 ISSUE OF THE USA INSTITUTE JOURNAL AND IN THE DECEMBER 1976 AND JANUARY 1977 ISSUES OF THE IMEMO JOURNAL "INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.")

6. QUITE NATURALLY NEITHER PRIMAKOV NOR OTHER SOVIET EXPERTS HERE OFFER AS DETAILED A VIEW OF THEIR HOPES

FOR THE FUTURE AS THEY DO OF THEIR PAST DISAPPOINTMENTS. NEVERTHELESS, MOSCOW'S SHORT TERM POLICY IS SINGULARLY CLEAR--RETURN TO GENEVA (WITH THE PALESTINIANS THIS TIME) AND BEGIN THE PROCESS OF BARGAINING AWAY ISRAELI HELD ARAB TERRITORIES--PART OF WHICH CAN BE USED FOR A PALESTINIAN STATE OF RATHER INDETERMINATE NATURE--IN EXCHANGE FOR INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES OF THE ISRAELI BORDERS AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THE 1967 LINES).

7. THERE ARE SEVERAL OBJECTIVES THE SOVIETS HOPE TO ACHIEVE BY GOING TO GENEVA SOON. FIRST, THEY WANT IMPLICIT RECOGNITION BY ALL, AND PARTICULARLY BY THE U.S., OF THEIR GREAT POWER STATUS AS THE CO-EQUAL CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE MEPC. SECOND, THE CONFERENCE OFFERS THEM A HOPE OF RE-POLARIZING THE M.E. POLITICAL SITUATION, THUS DRIVING SOME ARAB STATES AND THE PALESTINIANS TOWARDS THE SOVIET UNION AND FORCING THE AMERICANS TO SHOW THEMSELVES AS MORE COMMITTED TO ISRAELI THAN TO CONFIDENTIAL

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ARAB INTERESTS. THIRD, THEY SEE IN THE MEPC AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REDUCING THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRO-U.S. ARAB STATES LIKE SAUDI ARABIA, WHO WILL NOT BE PRESENT. LASTLY, WHETHER THE CONFERENCE IS POLARIZED OR NOT, GENEVA OFFERS THE SOVIET UNION THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVING ITS TATTERED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PALESTINIANS AND THE SYRIANS, AND, AT LEAST, AVOIDING WORSENING OF ITS RELATIONS WITH EGYPT. THUS, IN A SENSE THE MEPC COULD BE A PANACEA FOR THE SOVIETS IN THE M.E.

8. IMPLICIT IN MOSCOW'S MEPC SCENARIO IS THE APPLICATION OF U.S. PRESSURE--POLITICAL, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC--TO ISRAEL FIRST TO GET HER TO GENEVA AND THEN TO FORCE THE CONCESSIONS NECESSARY TO SATISFY THE PALESTINIANS AND THE CONFRONTATION STATES. MOSCOW HAS ANTICIPATED THE QUESTION OF WHAT IT MIGHT DO TO MOVE M.E. PLAYERS AND EVENTS TOWARD A PEACEFUL SOLUTION BY REPORTING HARD BARGAINING WITH THE ARAB RESISTANCE STATES, E.G., WITH LIBYA (REF A) AND, AS BREZHNEV RECENTLY TOLD ITALIAN FONMIN FORLANI, BY INDICATING A WILLINGNESS TO PRESSURE THE PALESTINIANS ON THE ISSUE OF ISRAELI RECOGNITION (REF B). MORE IMPORTANT FOR IMMEDIATE U.S. POLICY IS MOSCOW'S TROUBLE-MAKING CAPACITY BEFORE THE CONFERENCE IS CONVOKED. HERE THEY HAVE BEEN KEEPING THE POT BUBBLING IN SEVERAL WAYS. WHILE MOSCOW TRIES TO KEEP ATTENTION FOCUSED ON U.S. ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL, IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA, SOVIET ARMS SALES TO LIBYA HAVE REACHED UNPRECEDENTED HEIGHTS --WITH SOME PROSPECT OF MORE EXPORTS TO THE AREA FOLLOWING THE RECENT VISITS OF QADHAFI AND SADAM HUSSEIN TO MOSCOW. SOVIET SALES TO SYRIA AND IRAQ HAVE KEPT THOSE COUNTRIES' ARMS STOCKS AT ABOVE THE OCTOBER 1973

LEVEL. ONLY EGYPT--A CRUCIAL EXCEPTION--HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO DIP ONCE MORE INTO THE SOVIET ARMS TROUGH. ON ANOTHER FRONT, MOSCOW HAS ALREADY SIGNALLED ITS IMPATIENCE WITH PAST U.S. POLICY BY BELATEDLY REFUSING TO PAY ITS SHARE OF THE UN SINAI FORCES. MOSCOW DOES NOT
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INTEND TO PAY FOR A UN FIG LEAF TO COVER ADDITIONAL U.S. PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE IN THE AREA. MOREOVER BY TACITLY REMINDING THE U.S. THAT THE UNEF AND UNTSO MANDATES MUST BE PERIODICALLY RENEWED, MOSCOW HAS INDICATED TO THE U.S. THAT ITS TROUBLE-MAKING OPTIONS REMAIN OPEN.

9. ON THE EVE OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO THE M.E. AND WITH HIS VISIT TO MOSCOW SOON TO COME, WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS DESPERATELY WANT TO BE RECOGNIZED BY THE U.S. IN THE M.E. CONTEXT. THEY HAVE PLAYED UP, AND PROBABLY ARRANGED RECENT VISITS BY THEIR RADICAL CLIENTS--THE LIBYANS AND THE IRAQIS--AND THEY HAVE JUST DISPATCHED MFA N.E. COUNTRIES DEPT. CHIEF SYTENKO ON AS HASTY TRIP TO THE MORE MODERATE ARAB STATES--EGYPT, SYRIA AND JORDAN. THEY HAVE SPELLED OUT THEIR UNHAPPINESS WITH U.S. SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY AND THE PARTIAL AGREEMENTS--PARTICULARLY SINAI II WHICH RESULTED IN INCREASING U.S. PRESENCE IN THE REGION WHICH CAME AFTER AN EARLIER U.S. DEFCON 3 THREAT TO FORESTALL A SOVIET PRESENCE). THEY HAVE COYLY HINTED AT THEIR WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH THE U.S. TO ARRANGE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE FOR, SUPPOSEDLY, OUR MUTUAL ADVANTAGE (REF D). AND, AT THE SAME TIME, THEY HAVE REMINDED US OF THEIR TROUBLE-MAKING POTENTIAL. STILL, MOSCOW SEEMS CLEARLY AWARE THAT THE U.S. DOES--AS SADAT RECENTLY SAID--HOLD 90 PERCENT OF THE M.E. CARDS IN ITS HAND. AT THE MOMENT THEN, THE SOVIETS ARE WAITING TO SENSE THE FIRST REAL SIGNS OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S M.E. POLICY AND OF THE ROLE WHICH THE AMERICANS INTEND FOR THEM TO PLAY. THEY ARE WAITING WATCHFULLY BUT WITH A BAD TASTE IN THEIR MOUTHS FROM THE LAST ROUND. TOON

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